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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4780
INFO RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 4026
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 3268
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 3093
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 7155
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1779
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 2243

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 003190

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [KFRD](#) [IN](#) [BT](#)

SUBJECT: BHUTANESE OFFICIAL TURNS SMUGGLER

¶1. SUMMARY: Post has identified a Bhutanese smuggler with connections to the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce. Eight of nine associated applicants confessed to paying up to \$10,000 to their fixer to allow them to work and/or immigrate to the U.S. Given a relatively small Bhutanese visa applicant pool (we adjudicated 850 cases in FY-08), such a large group gives us more cause for reflection when interviewing these applicants. Post has brought this case to the attention of Government of Bhutan officials in New Delhi. Post has also completed a validation study of recent Bhutanese applicants to be reported septel. END SUMMARY.

¶2. An adjudicating officer facing a larger group of Bhutanese applicants noted striking similarities in their cases. The group included a former Secretary General of the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce (and current owner of a travel agency) and nine others. The travel agent, Tshering Dorji (DOB 07MAR1947) had traveled to the U.S. yearly for the past six to seven years, while the rest had never traveled outside Bhutan (except for India). Each of the applicants, however, had some connection to the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce, either as members or having been employed there at some time. The cases were referred to the Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU), and the applicants were advised to return another day. A review of the travel agent's previous applications for visas by the FPU revealed that he attempted to secure visas for a group of at least three individuals on August 16, 2005 and a group of at least five applicants on November 7, 2006. According to ADIS checks, two of the three applicants in August 2005 have not returned; three of the five applicants in November 2006 have also not returned.

¶3. During the follow-up interview, the owner of the travel agency stated that in the latter years of his life he had decided to arrange travel for American and Japanese tourists to Bhutan and do the same for Bhutanese citizens who wanted to go to the United States. According to him, he charged each of his Bhutanese clients \$10,000 for a one month trip to New York City, Milwaukee, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

¶4. Each of the remaining nine applicants was then interviewed separately. Eight admitted they were charged \$10,000 for a tourist visa to the United States and confessed having discussed with the travel agent plans of staying in the U.S. for one year or two years. All eight penned written statements to that effect. Some had already paid the travel agent \$10,000; others had given him a deposit of \$5,000 and would pay the balance of \$5,000 upon receipt of the visa. All of the applicants' DS156 forms noted one-month intended stays and had been completed and signed by the travel agent as the preparer.

¶5. Given the nature of the smuggling plan, the travel agent was found ineligible under Section 212(a)(6)(E) of the INA. The eight applicants who confessed their misrepresentation were found ineligible under Section 212 (a)(6)(C)(i), while the last was refused under Section 214 (b).

¶6. Post brought the case to the attention of the Bhutanese Embassy Charge d'Affaires. He indicated he knew Tshering Dorji and would

inform the appropriate Ministry about the case.

¶7. Post has also conducted a three-part validation study of Bhutanese student visa applicants, other applicants in FY-07, and select applicants in FY-08. The results will be reported septel.

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